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WHY BRITAIN IS IN THE WAR

AND

WHAT SHE HOPES FROM THE FUTURE

A SPEECH

by

The Rt. Hon. Viscount Grey of Fallodon, K.G.

Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs,

Addressed to the Representatives of the Foreign Press in London,

on the

23rd OCTOBER, 1916.

(Published by Authority)

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LET me say to you that, in a time of war such as this, we all value the presence amongst us of a body of men belonging to other countries, both Allied and neutral, who will faithfully represent what they find to be our feeling; who will send out to the world a faithful picture of this country in the great struggle through which it is passing, who will speak the truth and who, if they can succeed not only in speaking the truth, which is comparatively easy, but in getting the truth believed through the world at large, will have rendered the greatest possible service we can ask of them.

The President said I was going to make an historic speech. I doubt whether any historic speech can be made while the war is still in progress. After the war, very likely, but while the war is in progress the real historic work is being done in the offices of the General Staffs of the Allied countries and on the battle-field, where our soldiers are fighting. Words can do but little. The work done by the General Staffs at headquarters, by the armies

in the field and the navies on the sea—that is the real work which is making history. We have had, since the autumn began, two or three notable speeches—first of all, a great speech by M. Briand in the French Chamber; then, next in time, an interview given by Mr. Lloyd George to a Press correspondent in this country; then a speech by Mr. Asquith in the House of Commons; and lately we have had a note struck just as firmly in Petrograd by an official *communiqué*, under the auspices of the Minister of the Interior. Those speeches have given to the world the note and the tone and the feeling of the Allies at this moment. I endorse all that they have said, but this afternoon for a few moments I would like to talk, not about the conditions of peace, which can only be stated and formulated by the Allies all together and not by any one of them separately, but about the general object which the Allies must secure in this war.

1870 OVER AGAIN.

To do that I would ask you to recall that we must never forget how the war came about. If we are to approach the subject in a proper spirit it can only be by recalling, and never for

one moment forgetting, what was the real cause of the war. Some people say "You need not go back on the old ground now; everybody knows it!" You cannot go back on it too often. It affects the conditions of peace.

Germany talks of peace. Her statesmen talk of peace to-day, but what sort of peace do they talk of? Oh, they say, Germany must have guarantees against being attacked again. If this war had been forced upon Germany that would be a logical statement. It is precisely because it was not forced upon Germany, but forced by Germany upon Europe, that it is the Allies who must have guarantees for future peace. In July, 1914, no one thought of attacking Germany. It is said that Russia was the first to mobilize. That, I understand, is what is represented in Germany as a justification for the statement that the war was not an aggressive war on Germany's part, but was forced upon her. Russia never made the mobilization of which Germany complained until after Germany had refused a conference, and she never made it until after a report had appeared in Germany that Germany had ordered mobilization and that report had been telegraphed to Petrograd. As a matter of fact it was the story of 1870 over again—preparation

for war, not only the preparation of material, but the preparatory stages for war all advanced in Berlin to a point beyond that of any other country, and then, when the chosen moment came, a manœuvre was made to provoke some other country to take a defensive step, and when that defensive step was taken, then to receive it with an ultimatum which made war inevitable.

The same thing with the invasion of Belgium. Strategic railways had been made in Germany, and the whole plan of campaign of the German staff was to attack through Belgium, and now it is represented that they had to attack through Belgium because other people had planned to attack through Belgium. I would like nothing better than to see those statements—that the Russian mobilization was an aggressive and not defensive measure, and that any other Power than Germany had trafficked in the neutrality of Belgium or planned to attack through Belgium —I would like to see those statements investigated before any independent and impartial tribunal.

GERMANY'S WILL TO WAR.

German organization is very successful in some things, but in nothing more successful than in preventing the truth from reaching their

own people, and succeeding in presenting to them a point of view which is not that of the truth—the statement that the war was forced upon Germany. When England proposed the conference Russia, France, and Italy accepted the conference; when four Powers offer a conference and one Power refuses it, is it the Powers who are offering the conference which are forcing war, or the Power which refuses it? The Emperor of Russia offered The Hague Tribunal. One Sovereign offers The Hague Tribunal and another ignores it. Is it the Sovereign who offers reference to The Hague who is forcing war, or the Sovereign who ignores the offer? On the very eve of war France gave her pledge to respect the neutrality of Belgium if Germany would not violate it. We asked for such a pledge. Was it the Power which asked for the pledge and the Power which gave the pledge which were responsible for the violation of the neutrality of Belgium, or the Power which refused to give the pledge? Belgium knows, and every Frenchman and Englishman knows, that never at any time was there a suggestion that French or English soldiers should enter Belgium unless it were to defend Belgium from a violation of her neutrality, which had first been undertaken by Germany.

Why was it that all the efforts to avoid the war in July, 1914, failed? Well, because you cannot have peace without good will, and because in Berlin there was the will to war and not the will to peace.

Now just lately, I think to an American, the Crown Prince has deplored the loss of life caused by this war. Yet it was because we knew what the suffering of war must be, because we knew how terrible a thing war, let loose in Europe, would be, that we tried to avoid it in 1914. Then was the time to have been penetrated with a sense of all that war would mean. After we have had this terrible experience, our Allies and ourselves are determined that the war shall not end till we can be sure, at any rate, that the generations which come after us and our nations in future are not to be subjected to such a terrible trial again.

THE PLAN THAT FAILED.

What was the German plan? I saw some statement in the Press the other day that a German officer had recognized that Germany had failed this time, but that in ten years she was going to succeed. What was the plan; what was the failure? It was to be a short, successful war. There was a time-table—so long

to get to Paris; so long to defeat France; so long afterwards to defeat Russia—and as to England, the plan was that England should be kept out of the war, but if England did enter the war it was not thought that the Expeditionary Force we had available would be enough to upset the enemy's plans. People who are militarists, whose ideas and thoughts run solely on military considerations, wholly material, forget to estimate and cannot estimate the spirit and the soul which exists in nations when they are attacked and are fighting for their lives. The plan was that France and Russia were to be defeated, England was to be isolated—and disgraced.

We must never forget, as we go through this war, that an offer was made to us to keep out of the war. We were asked by the German Government to engage to remain neutral on certain conditions. We were asked to condone the violation of the neutrality of Belgium—because that was what the offer came to—though the German Government were pledged by treaty to uphold it. And we were asked to give Germany a free hand to take whatever she liked of the French Colonies. That is why I say the plan was not only to isolate us, but to discredit us. I would ask any neutral to put it to himself—what would be the future of this country if

the British Government had for a moment accepted such an offer? We might have had an Army and a Navy, but there would have been no *moral*, no spirit in the nation. We should have had the contempt of the whole world. Tactics so gross as that did not succeed, and I need not recall what the reply of the British Government was, nor what the spirit of the nation was at the opening of the war.

We should not think merely of what Germany says to-day: it is worth looking back to the expectations of her Government and people when the war started. Then we saw something of their real mind. There was a certain Professor Ostwald in Germany, who unburdened himself, I think to an American, in August, 1914. He called himself a pacifist, and this is what he described as German aims. Germany was to dictate peace to the rest of Europe, and the principle of the absolute sovereignty of individual nations must be given up.

Don't let us forget that that was the spirit in which Germany began this war. What is the spirit in which the war is being carried on by the Allies and ourselves to-day? I take it from the words of the Prime Minister the other day:—"We shall fight until we have established supremacy of right over force, free

development under equal conditions, and each in accordance with its own genius, of all States, great and small, which build up the family of civilized mankind."

ALLIED UNITY ESSENTIAL.

Into this struggle we have put, rightly and necessarily, all our resources; all our wealth; all our material; and all our labour; and now, when we have had time to equip and train a large Army, we are putting into it all the best life's blood of the nation to shed it on the Continent, side by side with our Allies, in emulation of them, stimulated by the courage and self-sacrifice which they themselves are showing in defence of their own country. We are doing it because we know that their cause and ours is one; that to the end and for the future we fall or stand together; that the separation of one from the other is the destruction of the one separated, and not its safety, and that for all of us unity is essential, not merely to victory, but to our future life and success. Germany has been trying throughout the war to separate one from the other—now one, now another. Not a week passes that does not confirm our resolve to go through with our Allies to the end, and theirs

to go through with each other. I trust that the memory of the suffering we have undergone together, the memory of the joint courage which is carrying us through all that we have been through side by side, will be a perpetual bond of alliance and sympathy between our Government and peoples.

WHAT NEUTRALS CAN DO.

Looking to the future after the war, what is it that neutrals can do? The other day a correspondent sounded me upon the subject of what neutrals can do. I wrote in reply: "I believe that the best work that neutrals can do for the moment is to work up an opinion for such an agreement between nations as will prevent a war like this from happening again. If nations had been united in such an agreement, and prompt and resolute to insist in July, 1914, that the dispute must be referred to a conference or to The Hague, and that the Belgian Treaty must be observed, there would have been no war." I would ask neutrals to observe this—that belligerent countries engaged in war, fighting as we are to-day in a struggle for life and death, fighting, it is true, for victory, with increasing prospects of seeing that victory

approaching nearer, but still knowing that if we stop short of victory we stop short of everything —nations engaged in such a struggle cannot be expected to have much time to spend upon developing ideas of what can be done after victory is secured. But neutrals can do it, and it is interesting to observe the attitude, not only of President Wilson, but of Mr. Hughes, the Republican Candidate for the Presidency.

In the United States a league has already sprung up, supported by various distinguished people, with the object, not of interfering with belligerents in this war, but of getting ready for some international association, after this war is over, which shall do its part in making peace secure in future. I would like to say that if we seem to have little time to give to such ideas ourselves while we are engaged in this struggle, such a work in neutral countries is one to which we should all look with favour and with hope. Only bear this in mind, if the nations in the world after the war are to do something more effective than they have been able to do before, to bind themselves together for the common object of peace, they must be prepared not to undertake more than they are prepared to uphold by force, and to see when the time of crisis comes that it is upheld by force. In other words, we say to

neutrals who are occupying themselves with this question that we are in favour of it. But we shall have to ask when the time comes for them to make any demand on us for such a thing: "Will you play up when the time comes?" It is not merely a sign manual of Sovereigns or Presidents that is required to make a thing like that worth while; it must also have behind it Parliaments and national sentiment.

The object of this league is to insist upon treaties being kept and some other settlement being tried before resort to war. In July, 1914, there was no such league in existence. Supposing a generation hence such a condition of things as in July, 1914, recurs and there is such a league in existence, it may, and it ought to keep the peace. Everything will depend upon whether the national sentiment behind it is so penetrated by the lessons of this war as to feel that in the future each nation, although not immediately concerned in this dispute, is yet interested, and vitally interested, in doing something, even if it be by force, to keep the peace.

GERMANY THE GREAT ANARCHIST.

But there must be more than that. You must have some agreement after this war is over

as to the methods under which war is to be conducted. Germany complains of our methods in this war. She complains of our blockade. From the very beginning Germany did her utmost to prevent food reaching this country. In the early stages of the war she sank two neutral ships with food for this country. It does not lie with her to complain of our blockade. But what about other methods which have been introduced—the sowing of mines indiscriminately upon the high seas, a danger equally to neutrals and to belligerents; the pouring of shells into defenceless coast towns? —because you must remember that what is required, according to the German official *communiqués*, to convert an Allied town on the coast into a fortress is not the position of guns in it or the presence of troops, but merely the fact that it has been fired upon by a German cruiser. Then there is the use of poisonous gas in war, which nobody would have believed possible if the Germans had not begun it, which nobody thought of using till the Germans began it. In the Gallipoli Peninsula neither we nor the French used gas, because we would not be the first to introduce it anywhere. That has been brought into the war. Then there is the sinking of merchant vessels, with the destruction

of the passengers and crews ; the acts committed in Belgium and other Allied territory in the occupation of Germany, some of which have been the subject of investigation and report, in breach of all the laws and conventions of war and all the most elementary dictates of humanity.

And one thing more, of which we hear little, very little, and do not know the full story. Since the outbreak of war, since Turkey entered the war, she has been the vassal of Germany. Enough has leaked through to make it clear that there has gone on, and is going on, in Turkey on a scale unprecedented, and with horrors unequalled before, an attempt to exterminate the Christian population ; horrors which Germany could have prevented, and which could only have gone on with her toleration. Perhaps some day some neutral nation who knows the full story will make it known to the world. All these things have been happening during this war, and what a prospect it opens for the future ! Are all the resources of science to continue to be devoted after this war to invent means of destroying the human race, with no restriction upon their use ? It is a prospect which threatens civilization and the existence of the race itself.

Germany, in letting loose these things, has

been the great anarchist who has let loose on the world a greater and more terrible anarchy than any individual anarchist ever dreamed of. In future, war, unless there is some means of restraining it, will by the development of science be made even more terrible and horrible than this war has been, because Germany has thrown down all the barriers which civilization previously built up so as to keep the horrors of war within bounds. Neutral nations have an interest in seeing that something is done to ensure that there shall be rules which shall be kept in future wars—rules which shall be so laid down and supported that it will be clear that any nation which departs from them will be regarded by the whole world as the enemy of the human race, and have the whole world against it.

The indiscriminate use of high explosives to destroy great cities, to destroy combatants and non-combatants alike, all those things which have been done in this war, the introduction of poisonous gas, the introduction perhaps of disease! It will need all the efforts not only of belligerents but of neutrals, after this war is over, to see that the barriers necessary to secure that the inventions of science are used in the future, in the air, on the land, in the water and

under the water, not for the destruction of mankind, but for its welfare, to see that all nations shall recognise some responsibility to prevent outbreaks of war, and that, if there be war, it shall be conducted by rules at least as humane as those which our ancestors observed, and which Germany to-day has disregarded and thrown to the winds. This is a matter in which the whole human race is interested.

YOUTH'S SACRIFICE.

Day by day it is brought home to us that here and in the countries of the Allies there are hundreds of thousands of homes to which, indeed, victory may bring a sense of pride and satisfaction, but to which it can never bring just the same gladness and joy in life that was in these homes before the war. Thousands of young men—one young life after another—go to the front, mount in spirit heights of nobleness and courage, to which in ordinary times even a long life gives no opportunity of attaining. And on those heights many of them pass away, leaving often some record of the spirit with which they have met their death, which makes us doubly proud of them, although it adds to the poignancy of grief and sense of

sorrow and loss. They are succeeded by others, and yet by others, and will be as long as the effort is required—a long procession from all our countries of men who die but who do not fail, because their life and the manner of their death is a glorious success.

This generation in its prime is giving its life, but it is giving it that the older generation now among us may live out its years after this war in peace, freedom, and honour, and that the generation which is now children, and the generations who are yet to come, may enjoy life and develop the national life, free from the stifling oppression of the domination of Prussian militarism. For years before this war we were living under the deepening shadow of Prussian militarism extending itself first over the whole of Germany, and then extending itself over the whole Continent. There must be no end to this war, no peace except a peace which is going to ensure that the nations of Europe live in the future free from that shadow in the open air and in the light of freedom. For that we are contending. We know that if mankind has any birthright, as we believe it has a birthright, to peace and to liberty, then our cause is just and right, because it is for those we are fighting.

When they ask us : " How long is the struggle to be continued ? " we can but reply that it must be continued till these things are secured, and if it be hard that the present generation in its prime should be called on to sacrifice all, it is for the sake of the future of the nation and the generations that come after. It is our determination, which the progress of the war but deepens, in common with our Allies, to continue the war until we have made it certain that the Allies in common shall have achieved the success which must and ought to be theirs, until they have secured the future peace of the whole Continent of Europe, until they have made it clear that all the sacrifices we have made shall not have been in vain.

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